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Headteacher
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Dear Mr Binks

Ofsted Subjects and Survey Inspection Programme—Art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 02 May 2007 to look at work in art, craft and design.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters are published on the Ofsted website every half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interview with the subject co-ordinator and advanced skills teacher, discussions with groups of children, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of children's work in Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and 2 and observation of lessons, some jointly observed with the subject co-ordinator.

Art, craft and design

The overall effectiveness of the subject was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

- Achievement and standards are outstanding because pupils make very good progress and develop skills, knowledge and understanding above those achieved in similar schools nationally. In the Foundation Stage the individual differences between pupils' work are celebrated and evidence of pupils' approaches to different processes are recorded giving clear value to these important features of creativity. In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils

develop wide knowledge of different artists and also understand how the work of some artists changed over time. This accelerates their progress because pupils strive for originality in their own work. Particularly good progress is evident in two-dimensional media where pupils build confidence in their use of visual concepts such as colour and composition. Pupils' confident use of ICT contributes to the creativity of their work because boys and girls are prepared to develop their ideas at a fast pace and are not afraid to make mistakes. Their use of three-dimensional media is competent but pupils revisit the same media less frequently which limits their confidence in transforming and refining three-dimensional ideas.

- Pupils enjoy the subject and would like to do more. They listen carefully and many pupils mirror the characteristics of the teaching when energy, enthusiasm and passion for the subject are explicit. In the lessons observed resources were well prepared for the pupils but where decisions were expected different pupils were able to make them either independently or with an appropriate level of supervision by teachers and support staff. Some pupils expressed an interest in developing and applying their skills outside of lessons through homework or visits. Sketchbooks, although used well by different teachers to track pupils' progress, could be developed to contain more evidence of their ability to experiment, prepare and follow-up lesson objectives.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in the subject are outstanding overall.

- Teachers plan lessons thoroughly making sure that pupils are shown interesting and inspiring examples of work by different artists as an integral part of their learning. ICT is used very effectively as a teaching tool and learning resource. Some pupils have worked with visiting artists or appreciate their work during school visits for example to nearby Rufford Park. However, learning through first hand experience of an art gallery is an underdeveloped aspect of provision. The best teaching brings the experiences and interests of teachers into the classroom. Pupils clearly value these opportunities to learn how to analyse the work of other artists or learn how to use techniques that are demonstrated skilfully. Pupils are given a clear indication that their own ideas are however paramount and this contributes to their confidence and creativity. Well displayed examples of pupils' achievements throughout the school reinforce this message.
- Boys and girls with different abilities are supported effectively. The needs of individual pupils are identified clearly and addressed sensitively; pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make an equal contribution in lessons. Teachers are consistently skilled in spotting an approach taken by an individual pupil that others could learn from; the quality of work shared is unpicked without promoting it as a solution for others. This approach is a consistently strong feature of lessons, providing time and opportunity for other pupils to reflect on their own work and strive for additional quality.

It is also effective in developing pupils' appreciation of other pupil's talents.

Quality of curriculum

The art, craft and design curriculum is good with some outstanding features.

- Pupils are given a good range of opportunities to work in different media. Their depth of skills, knowledge and understanding is promoted particularly well through two-dimensional activity that provides structured opportunities for pupils to revisit previous experiences by developing work or by combining different media. This approach starts early; Key Stage 1 pupils were observed working over their previously painted surfaces with pastels having explored and discussed how to use blending, feathering, scumbling, cross-hatching, accurately matching words to actions. However the good long term planning that ensures coverage of the national curriculum could do more to structure pupils' experience of different art concepts particularly 'texture, structure, space and form' to ensure that teachers and visiting artists build progressively across all areas of experience. Nevertheless, themes are very well planned to include a good balance between work from observation and imagination.
- The art, craft and design curriculum is enhanced by the range of artists, craftmakers and designers used by teachers for inspiration. This includes unknown artists that are used because their work links well to the scheme of work or they complement or contrast with other references to the work of others. It is a strength of the curriculum that the work of 'other pupils' is included in references to the work of 'other artists' because this strengthens the confidence of pupils to see themselves as young artists and make connections to the work of others. Nevertheless, their first hand experience of original art made by other artists is patchy due to inconsistent use made of visiting artists or gallery visits.

Leadership and management of art, craft and design

Leadership and management are good with outstanding features.

- The approach to subject leadership and management is informal but effective due to the genuinely collaborative and entrepreneurial ethos of the school. The subject co-ordinator is deployed strategically to support staff and inspire pupils across the school. Work with different classes and a high profile given to display enables the subject co-ordinator to maintain a well informed view of strengths and areas for development. The joint observations conducted as part of the inspection demonstrated the accuracy of monitoring and evaluation. The subject has continued to flourish alongside whole school priorities to improve attainment, particularly in literacy. However, although the potential of art, craft & design as a context for improvement in core subjects is not fully realised

the use of ICT within the school provides an example of good practice where key skills are developed through the subject.

- The leadership and management of the subject are strengthened by the direct involvement of the senior leadership team in developing and disseminating exemplar teaching. This gives high value to the subject to established and trainee teachers, support staff, governors and parents. It also underpins the clear understanding shown by key staff of the features and factors associated with best practice in subject teaching in the school. Nevertheless, awareness of good practice elsewhere could be strengthened through involvement in initiatives such as Arts Council England's 'Artsmark' award scheme or further liaison with local secondary schools to ensure that the high expectations of pupils' creativity at Priestsic Primary School are built on.

Inclusion

The outstanding inclusion in the subject is clearly evident through the high levels of participation shown by different pupils, some having transferred to the school following exclusion elsewhere. Despite considerable growth and expansion the ethos of the school is centred on 'Every Child Matters'. This is explicit in the subject through the personable and positive relationships between pupils and staff, co-operation and collaboration between pupils and recognition by staff and pupils that the subject provides equal opportunities for all to achieve.

Subject issue: The impact of assessment on pupils' progress and creativity

Teachers provide a high level of well informed feedback to pupils about how to improve their work. Good teamwork and a shared interest in and responsibility for all pupils as they move through the school, contributes to good communication about the progress made by individual pupils. Sketchbooks are used effectively to record the development of pupils' skills as they move through the school. However, National Curriculum assessment levels in the subject contribute little to monitoring pupils' progress and creativity. Nevertheless, the school provides an accurate summary of pupils' achievements for parents and is developing a coherent assessment scheme across subjects.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to develop wider use of sketchbooks to promote continuity between learning in school and outside and to prompt learning in other subjects
- to develop the use of subject specific learning objectives to promote progression across the full range of knowledge, understanding and skills

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art, craft and design at the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector